

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 VIENTI 00969 071031Z
ACTION EA-12

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PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9571
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 969

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, LA, US
SUBJECT: US-LAO RELATIONS

REF: A. STATE 224426, B. VIENTIANE 939

1. THE VIEW OF U.S.-LAO RELATIONS FROM VIENTIANE IS NOT AS BRIGHT AS THAT DESCRIBED BY LAO CHARGE KHAMTAHN IN WASHINGTON (REF A). AUSTRALIAN EMBOFF MICHAEL POTTS HAS RECENTLY INFORMED US OF SOME RATHER HARD-LINE REMARKS MADE BY ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER KHAMPAY BOUPHA DURING LAST WEEK'S FLOOD INSPECTION TRIP.

2. ACCORDING TO POTTS, KHAMPAY BROUGHT UP THE SUBJECT OF THE MONTGOMERY VISIT, APPARENTLY WITH THE INTENTION THAT HIS VIEW REACH THE U.S. KHAMPAY SAID THAT IT WAS HIS IMPRESSION THAT THE CONGRESSMEN DID NOT FULLY APPRECIATE THE DIFFICULTIES IN ASKING THE LAO PEOPLE TO

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 VIENTI 00969 071031Z

SEARCH FOR THE REMAINS OF AMERICAN MIA'S, OFTEN IN ISOLATED LOCATIONS, IN AREAS WHICH HAD BEEN HEAVILY BOMBED, AND WHEN THE "CRIMES" OF THE US ARE STILL FRESH IN THE MINDS OF THE LAO. HE NOTED THAT 700,000 PERSONS HAD BEEN DISPLACED BECAUSE OF US ACTIONS, AND THAT THE LAO PEOPLE WERE NOT EAGER TO SEARCH FOR US REMAINS WHEN MANY OF THEIR OWN RELATIVES ARE STILL MISSING.

NEVERTHELESS, SAID KHAMPHAY, THE LPDR HAD RETURNED FOUR SETS OF REMAINS AS A GESTURE OF GOOD WILL. HOWEVER, RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. ARE STILL NOT ON A GOOD FOOTING. THE U.S. HAS NOT CONTRIBUTED TO HEALING THE WOUNDS OF WAR, AND IS STILL SUPPORTING REACTIONARIES AND EXILES. HE SAID IT WAS UP TO THE U.S. TO MAKE THE FIRST MOVE.

3. POTTS ASKED KHAMPHAY IF THE U.S. DONATION OF 10,000 TONS OF RICE WAS NOT A POSITIVE ACT. KHAMPHAY REPORTEDLY DISMISSED THIS AS REALLY A UN GIFT. WHEN POTTS ASKED IF THE LPDR REALLY FELT THAT THE U.S. WAS HELPING REACTIONARIES, KHAMPHAY SAID YES, THAT THE U.S. WAS COMMITTED TO THE SUPPORT OF PEOPLE SUCH AS VANG PAO, AND THAT THE U.S. IS STILL NOT PREPARED TO ABANDON THE PAST AND LOOK TO A NEW FUTURE.

4. POTTS ASKED IF LAOS HAD SIMILAR PROBLEMS WITH THAILAND. KHAMPHAY REPORTEDLY REPLIED THAT THE LPDR HAS NO PROBLEM WITH THE PRESENT THAI GOVERNMENT AND THAT LAOS IS MAKING GOOD PROGRESS IN IMPROVING ITS RELATIONSHIPS WITH ALL THE ASEAN COUNTRIES.

5. ALSO DURING THE TRIP TO SOUTHERN LAOS, CHARGE ATTEMPTED TO DISCUSS WITH KHAMPHAY LAO CHARGES OF CIA INVOLVEMENT IN THE SUVE MURDERS AND THE DETRIMENTAL EFFECT THIS TYPE OF FALSE ACCUSATION COULD HAVE ON OUR CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 VIENTI 00969 071031Z

RELATIONSHIP. KHAMPHAY WAS QUITE COOL IN HIS RESPONSE; HE SAID ONLY THAT THIS FINDING WAS THE RESULT OF THE COURT'S INVESTIGATION AND HAD TO BE ACCEPTED.

6. COMMENT: KHAMPHAY'S HARD-LINE POSITION AND THE RECENT MEDIA ATTACKS AGAINST THE U.S. underscore a BASIC CONTRADICTION IN THE LAO CONCEPT OF IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. THE LAO EVIDENTLY STILL HOPE THAT THE CAN CONVINCE OR PRESSURE THE U.S. TO PROVIDE AID WITHOUT STRINGS, WHILE THEY CONTINUE TO USE THE U.S. AS A SCAPEGOAT FOR THEIR OWN INTERNAL PROBLEMS. WE ARE NOT SURE IF THE MORE DOCTRINAIRE AND SELF-RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE LAO LEADERS ARE AWARE OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THESE TWO OBJECTIVES.

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